

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Original) A method for forming a protein and carotenoid product, comprising the steps of:

- (a) preparing a solution of a carotenoid in a solvent;
- (b) adding a source of metal ions;
- (c) adding a source of protein; and
- (d) incubating the solution.

2. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the carotenoid comprises esters of hydroxyl- or carboxyl-containing carotenoid.

3. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the carotenoid is selected from the group comprising actinioerythrol, astaxanthin, bixin, canthaxanthin, capsanthin, capsorubin, β -8'-apo-carotenal (apo-carotenal), β -12'-apo-carotenal, α -carotene, β -carotene, "carotene" (a mixture of α - and β -carotenes), γ -carotene, β -cryptoxanthin, lutein, lycopene, violerythrin, zeaxanthin, and esters of hydroxyl- or carboxyl-containing members thereof.

4. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the carotenoid comprises xanthophylls and esters of hydroxyl- or carboxyl-containing members thereof.

5. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the metal ions are selected from the group comprising Mg^{++} , Mn^{++} , Fe^{+++} , K^{+} , and Ca^{++} .

6. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the solvent is selected from the group comprising tetrahydrofuran, methanol, ethanol, propylene glycol, methylene chloride, and isopropyl alcohol.

7. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the protein source is selected from the group comprising soybean proteins and isolates; albumin from various sources (i.e., bovine and chicken); whey proteins, concentrates and isolates; isoflavone containing protein products; corn germ proteins; oat flour; soybean proteinase inhibitors, comprising Kunitz,

Bowman-Birk, and carboxypeptidase inhibitors; potato proteinase inhibitors; and hydrolyzed vegetable proteins.

8. (Original) A method as defined in claim 1, further comprising the step of drying to form a dry product containing the protein and carotenoid product.

9. (Currently amended) A method for forming a protein and carotenoid product, comprising the steps of:

(a) ~~adding a carotenoid to~~ preparing a protein-containing mixture;

(b) ~~that also contains~~ providing a source of carotenoids;

(c) providing a source of metal ions; and

(d) ~~incubating~~ heating the mixture.

10. (Original) A composition of a carotenoid and a protein, comprising a product formed by the method of claim 1.

11. (Original) A personal care composition, comprising a carotenoid and protein product of claim 10 added to a personal care product.

12. (Original) A beverage composition, comprising a carotenoid and protein product of claim 10 added to a beverage.

13. (Original) A food composition, comprising a carotenoid and protein product of claim 10 added to a food.

14. (Original) A composition of a carotenoid and a protein for addition to a food, beverage, or personal care product, comprising a product formed by the method of claim 1.

15. (Original) A method of supplementing a food, beverage, dietary supplement, or personal care product with a protein, a carotenoid, or both, comprising the step of adding to a food, beverage, or personal care product a carotenoid and protein product formed by the method of claim 1.